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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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EXAMINER

DAHIMENE, MAHMOUD

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1765

DATE MAILED: 03/13/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/729,458

Applicant(s)

CHIU ET AL.

Examiner

Mahmoud Dahimene

Art Unit

1765

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 December 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-30 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-30 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>03/03/2004</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

3. Claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063).

Lim et al. disclose a method for forming a multiple gate dielectric structure comprising the steps (Page 4, line 22) of; providing a first dielectric layer 14 (figure 1) overlying a substrate 12, forming a patterned photoresist overlaying the first dielectric

Art Unit: 1765

layer, etching the exposed dielectric which reads on "removing second section of first insulator", perform photoresist removal to remove the masking layer and grow additional gate dielectric in at least one of multiple regions which reads on "performing a first photoresist removal procedure resulting in partial removal of said photoresist shape and forming a second insulator layer on said bare first section of said semiconductor substrate" (figure 7) (page 2, Paragraph 20), perform a post ash clean which reads on "performing a second photoresist removal procedure completely removing said photoresist shape", and oxidizing the dielectric layer causing the dielectric layer to have desired target thickness. Figure 6 shows a gate structure, with two gate insulator thicknesses 42 and 54, and conductive layers 38 and 50 which reads on "performing a procedure to convert said first insulator layer located on a second section of said semiconductor substrate, to a first gate insulator layer, and to convert said second insulator layer to a second gate insulator layer, wherein the thickness of said first gate insulator is different than the thickness of said second gate insulator layer, and forming a first conductive gate structure on said first gate insulator layer and forming a second conductive gate structure on said second gate insulator layer".

A difference is noted between the reference of Lim et al. and applicants claim 1, the reference of Lim et al. fails to teach completely removing the gate dielectric layer (14) from the gate dielectric portions (18) and (20) in regions (6) and (8) in the preferred embodiments. However, Lim et al. also teach that in prior art, it is conventional to perform a complete removal of the oxide, Lim et al. cite "a complete etch of the oxide (dielectric) is used to define the gate oxide" (page 1, paragraph 0003), and "the

Art Unit: 1765

subsequent pre-clean steps (photoresist + residues removal) attack the silicon substrate exposed, the exposed surfaces, during the completed dielectric etch become rough" (page 1, paragraph 0003). Lim et al. discloses a partial etch and ashing in order "to improve the interface between the gate dielectric and the substrate" (page 1, paragraph 0015). Lim et al. considered the option of complete removal of the dielectric to the bare Si surface since it is disclosed as prior art, in their reference, Lim et al. propose a solution to the problem associated with roughening the surface by leaving a small dielectric thickness. Removal of all the dielectric is considered by the above reference as conventional.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made, willing to accept a silicon rough surface after etch and pre-clean, to modify the process of Lim to remove completely the dielectric (14) in region (8) to expose a bare substrate in region (8) because the reference of Lim et al. suggests it is conventional to remove all the dielectric in the instance where a rougher surface of the substrate is acceptable. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to completely remove the dielectric in region (8) in order to grow a second dielectric in region (8) with a different thickness than the first dielectric of region (6).

As for applicants claims 2, 10 and 11, Lim et al. disclose the dielectric layer could be silicon oxide (Page 4, claim 3) with a thickness between 30 and 70 Angstroms (Page 2, Paragraph 17) for the first oxide layer, and 20 Angstroms for the second oxide (Page 2, paragraph 20).

Art Unit: 1765

As for applicants claim 5, Lim et al. disclose a second dielectric (silicon dioxide) layer thickness is on the order or less than 10 Angstrom (Lim et al. claim 6)

As for applicants claim 6, Lim et al. cites the use of SPM for what they refer to as photoresist clean which reads on as a "second photoresist removal procedure" (Page 2, Paragraphs 20 and 21).

4. Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Wolf et al. (Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 1, Lattice Press, CA, 1986).

Applicants are claiming a method for forming a multi gate insulator layer where claim 3 consists of removing a section of an insulator layer, which could be silicon oxide, with a buffered hydrofluoric (BHF) solution.

Lim et al. disclose a similar method described above (section 2.) including a process step for etching a dielectric layer.

A difference is noted between applicant's claim and the reference of Lim. Lim et al. fail to specify the method for said etch (Lim et al. claim 1).

Wolf et al. teach a common etch solution for silicon dioxide consisting of a buffered HF solution (Page 532) in conventional.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to select a buffered HF solution as the etchant in the process of Lim et al. to etch the first insulator layer, because a buffered HF solution

Art Unit: 1765

maintains stable etch characteristics (Wolf et al.), and that it is conventional to include this step in semiconductor manufacturing process.

5. Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Ryoo (US 6784060).

Applicants are claiming a method for forming a multi gate insulator layer where claim 4 consists of a first step for removing photoresist using ozone water.

Lim et al. disclose a similar method described above (section 2.) including an photoresist removal step (Lim et al., claim 1).

A difference is noted between applicant's claim 4 and the reference of Lim et al. Lim et al. fail to specify the exact photoresist removal procedure.

Ryoo discloses a similar semiconductor manufacturing process where the photoresist removal is performed with an ozone water solution (column 3, line 18).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the process of Lim et al. to include ozone water as the photoresist removing solution because it improves gate oxide reliability and oxidizes the exposed silicon surface as taught by Ryoo (column 6, line 59).

6. Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Shimizu et al. (US 20050158671 A1).

Applicants are claiming a method for forming a multi gate insulator layer where claim 7 consists of a photoresist removal procedure performed at temperatures between about 110°C and 150°C.

Lim et al. disclose a similar method described above (section 2.) including a process step for removing photoresist.

A difference is noted between applicant's claim 4 and the reference of Lim et al.

Lim et al. fail to specify a temperature range.

Shimizu et al. disclose a method for stripping photoresist, using SPM where the preferred temperature range is 100°C to 150°C (Page 4, paragraph 71).

Since Lim et al. do not restrict the temperature during photoresist removal, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to select a temperature of 110°C to 150°C in the process of Lim et al. Shimizu et al. illustrates that such a temperature range is effective for accomplishing photoresist removal. One of ordinary skill would be motivated to select such a temperature range because it is known to be effective to accomplish photoresist removal.

7. Claims 8 and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in

Art Unit: 1765

further view of Wolf et al. (Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 1, Lattice Press, CA, 1986).

Applicants are claiming a method for forming a multi gate insulator layer where claim 8 consists of using an oxygen-steam oxidation procedure, and claim 9 consists of performing the oxidation in a temperature range between 800 to 1050°C.

Lim et al. disclose a similar method described above (section 2.) including a process step for growing a thermal oxide layer.

A difference is noted between applicant's claims 8, 9 and the reference of Lim et al. Lim et al. fail to specify oxygen-steam ambient, and to specify a temperature range (Lim et al., claim 19).

Wolf et al. teachings cite an oxygen-steam oxidation where the recommended temperature range is 800 to 1000°C (Page 215). Steam accelerates the oxidation process as compared to pure oxygen.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the process of Lim et al. to use oxygen-steam for the oxidation process in a temperature range of 800 to 1000°C because as taught by Wolf, this is a conventional step in semiconductor manufacturing process.

8. Claims 12 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Wolf et al. (Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 2., Lattice Press, CA, 1990).

Applicants are claiming a method for forming a multi gate insulator layer where claims 12 and 13 consist of using doped polysilicon or a metal silicide as a conductive gate structure material.

Lim et al. disclose a similar method described above (section 2.) including a multi-gate structure with conductive gate electrode material (Lim et al., figure 6, items (38) and (50)).

It is noted that Lim et al. fail to specify the gate electrode material.

Wolf et al. cite doped polysilicon (Pages 318 and 398) and Tantalum silicide (Page 398) are commonly used as gate electrode materials.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the process of Lim et al. to use doped polysilicon or Tantalum silicide as gate conductive materials because they are conventional gate electrode materials in semiconductor manufacturing process as taught by Wolf.

9. Claims 14,15,16,17,19, 22 and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Ryoo (US 6784060).

Applicants are claiming a process of forming a semiconductor device comprising steps of, forming a first silicon oxide layer on entire surface of said semiconductor substrate of forming a photoresist shape on a first section of said first silicon oxide layer, in a region overlying a first section of said semiconductor substrate, removing second

Art Unit: 1765

section of said first silicon oxide layer exposing a bare second section of said semiconductor substrate, performing an ozone containing mixture procedure to partially remove said photoresist shape and to form a second silicon oxide layer on said bare second section of said semiconductor substrate, performing a sulfuric acid - hydrogen peroxide mixture (SPM) procedure to completely remove said photoresist shape, performing an oxidation procedure to convert said first silicon oxide layer to a first gate insulator layer on said first section of said semiconductor substrate, and to convert said second silicon oxide layer to a second gate insulator layer, wherein the thickness of said first gate insulator is greater than the thickness of said second gate insulator layer, forming a first conductive gate structure on said first gate insulator layer and forming second conductive gate structure on said second gate insulator layer.

Lim et al. disclose a process of forming a multi-gate dielectric structure for a semiconductor device which reads on "forming a semiconductor device" showing similar steps.

A difference is noted between applicant's claims and the reference of Lim et al. Lim et al. fail to specify "an ozone containing mixture procedure to partially remove photoresist" in the step corresponding to step (d) of applicant's claim 14.

Ryoo discloses a semiconductor manufacturing process for removing photoresist similar to step applicant's claim 14 where photoresist removal is performed with an ozone water solution (column 3, line 18).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the process of Lim et al. to include ozone

water as the photoresist removing solution because it improves gate oxide reliability and oxidizes the exposed silicon surface as taught by Ryoo (column 6, line 59).

As for claim 15, Lim et al. describe a first silicon oxide thickness of 30 to 70 Angstroms (Page 3, paragraph 23).

As for claim 16 and 17, Lim et al. note that conventional etch processes may be used to remove portions of the dielectric (silicon oxide) layer (Page 2, paragraph 19). Also, BHF solutions and CHF₃ plasmas are conventional etch processes for silicon oxide (See Wolf et al. Vol. 1, page 532, and page 581).

As for claim 19, Lim et al. cite a second oxide thickness in the range of 5 to 10 Angstroms (Page 2, paragraph 19).

As for claim 22, Lim et al. disclose a first silicon dioxide layer with a thickness between 30 and 70 Angstroms (Page 2, paragraph 17).

As for claim 23, Lim et al. disclose a second silicon dioxide layer with a thickness between 15 to 20 Angstroms (Page 2, paragraph 20).

10. Claim 18 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Ryoo (US 6784060) and in view of Yates et al. (US 20020173156 A1).

Applicants are claiming a process of forming a semiconductor device a process described above wherein claim 18 uses ozone water at 20 to 50°C for removing a photoresist layer.

Lim as modified by Ryoo has been described above in paragraph 9. Unlike the instant claimed invention as per claim 18, Lim and Ryoo fail to disclose performing the ozone water procedure at the specific temperature.

Yates et al. disclose a method for removing photoresist where an ozone water solution is used at 30°C (Page 3, paragraph 26) because ozone is more soluble in water at lower temperature.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the process of Lim and Ryoo to include the teachings of Yates to use ozone water at 30°C to obtain a high oxidation rate because ozone is more soluble in water at lower temperatures.

11. Claim 20 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Ryoo (US 6784060) as applied to claims 14,15,16, 17,19, 22 and 23 and in view of Shimizu et al. (US 20050158671 A1).

Applicants are claiming a method for forming a semiconductor device as described above, where claim 20 consists of a photoresist removal procedure performed at temperatures between about 110°C and 150°C.

Lim as modified by Ryoo disclose a similar method described above, including a process step for removing photoresist.

Art Unit: 1765

A difference is noted between applicant's claim 4 and the reference of Lim et al. modified by Ryoo, they fail to specify the temperature range for performing the procedure.

Shimizu et al. disclose a method for stripping photoresist, using SPM where the preferred temperature range is 100°C to 150°C (Page 4, paragraph 71).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the process of Lim et al. to include a temperature range, for photoresist removal, between 110°C and 150°C because it is conventional to include this temperature range in the steps of semiconductor manufacturing process as taught by Shimizu.

12. Claim 21 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Ryoo (US 6784060) and in view of Wolf et al. (Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 1., Lattice Press, CA , 1986).

Applicants are claiming a method for forming a semiconductor device as described above, where claim 21 consists of using an oxidation procedure in a temperature range between 800 to 1050°C.

Lim as modified by Ryoo disclose a similar method described above (section 2.) including a process step for growing a thermal oxide layer, but fail to specify a temperature range (Lim et al., claim 19).

Wolf et al. teach an oxygen-steam oxidation where the recommended temperature range is 800 to 1000°C (Page 215). Steam accelerates the oxidation process as compared to pure oxygen.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the process of Lim and Ryoo to use oxygen-steam for the oxidation process in a temperature range of 800 to 1050°C because it is a conventional step in semiconductor manufacturing process as taught by Wolf.

13. Claims 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 20050093063) as applied to claims 1,2,4,6,10 and 11 above, and in further view of Ryoo (US 6784060) and in view of Wolf et al. (Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 2., Lattice Press, CA , 1990).

Applicants are claiming a method for forming a multi gate insulator layer where claims 12 and 13 consists of using doped polysilicon or a metal silicide as a conductive gate structure material.

Lim as modified by Ryoo disclose a similar method described above (section 2.) including a multi-gate structure with conductive gate electrode material (Lim at al., figure 6 items (38) and (50)). It is noted that Lim at al. fail to specify the gate electrode material.

Wolf et al. cite doped polysilicon (Pages 318 and 398) and Tantalum silicide (Page 398) are commonly used as gate electrode materials.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify the process of Lim and Ryoo to use doped polysilicon or Tantalum silicide as gate conductive materials because they are conventional gate electrode materials in semiconductor manufacturing process as taught by Wolf.

4. Claim 26 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Masuoka (US 6,551,884) in view of Wolf et al. (S. Wolf and R.N. Ttauber, Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 1- Process Technology, Lattice Press, 1986).

The reference of Masuoka discloses a method of forming layers of oxide with different thicknesses on a surface of a substrate, the method comprises:

Forming a first insulator layer (13)(silicon oxide) over a substrate (column 4, line 34) and (column 6, line 30),

Thereafter, a photoresist mask (14) is formed to cover the I/O MOS area (60) and the high-speed MOS area (80) which is partially covering the substrate, followed by first wet etching to remove the first gate oxide film (13) in the low-leakage MOS area (70), as shown in FIG. 2B (column 6, line 32).

After removing the photoresist mask 14, second oxidation is performed to form second gate oxide film (15) in the low-leakage MOS area (70), as shown in FIG. 2C. At this stage, although the thickness of the first gate oxide film (13) slightly increases in the I/O MOS area (60) and the high-speed MOS area (80), the increase of the thickness is

Art Unit: 1765

substantially negligible due to the larger thickness of the first gate oxide film (13) with respect to the thickness of the second gate oxide film (15).

A difference is noted between applicants claim 26 and the reference of Masuoka, Masuoka is silent about forming a second insulator over the exposed substrate (15) (after oxide etch) while removing the photoresist pattern (14).

The reference of Wolf et al. teaches that silicon exhibits a propensity to form a stable oxide, even when exposed to oxidizing ambient (e.g. O₂, H₂O) silicon will form a very thin oxide (<20 Angstroms) (page 200, last paragraph). Most photoresist removal methods are performed with oxidizing components (page 518).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to expect oxide growth on bare silicon when an oxidizing photoresist removal method is used because as taught by Wolf et al. the oxide growth is expected when silicon is exposed to an oxidizing environment. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to use an oxidizing photoresist remover because the only non-oxidizing photoresist strippers commonly known, which are organic strippers, are not conventionally used anymore because of their short pot life (Wolf et al., page 518).

5. Claim 27 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Masuoka (US 6,551,884) in view of Wolf et al. (S. Wolf and R.N. Ttauber, Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 1- Process Technology, Lattice Press, 1986) as applied to claim 26 above, and further in view of Bergman et al. (US 6,286,231).

It is noted that the reference of Masuoka is silent about exposing the photoresist to an ozone containing mixture and sulfuric acid-hydrogen peroxide mixture (SPM).

Bergman et al. describe a method for wafer processing and drying, where ozone with sulfuric acid mixtures and SPM solution cleaning are cited to be conventionally used for photoresist removal and cleaning (column 1, lines 11-30).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the method of Masuoka to include the steps of removing photoresist with an ozone containing mixture and clean photoresist residues with SPM because these steps are conventionally used in photoresist removal and cleaning. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to remove photoresist with an ozone containing mixture and clean residues with SPM in order to obtain a residue free substrate while the proven reliable photoresist removal method is compatible with the rest of the process flow in the sense that the resulting oxidation of the exposed substrate region is not undesirable.

6. Claims 28-30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Masuoka (US 6,551,884) in view of Wolf et al. (S. Wolf and R.N. Ttauber, Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 1- Process Technology, Lattice Press, 1986) in view of Bergman et al. (US 6,286,231) as applied to claim 27 above, and further in view of Chen (US 20020166572) and Nishiki et al. (US 20030106572).

It is noted that the modified reference of Masuoka is silent about specific photoresist removal process temperatures.

Nishiki et al. discloses a photoresist removal procedure with an ozone containing mixture at 20°C (page 3, paragraph 0042), and Chen describes an SPM cleaning procedure at 120°C after photoresist removal (page 2, paragraph 0026).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to further modify the method of Masuoka to remove the photoresist (PR) with an ozone mixture at about 20°C and clean PR residues with SPM at about 120°C because those processing temperatures are conventionally used in the art of semiconductor processing.

As to claim 29, Masuoka discloses an oxide thickness of 19 angstroms (column 6, line 59), it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to grow any oxide thickness of less than 19 angstroms by reducing oxidation time if the device being formed requires such a thickness for operation. Applicants have not shown anything critical with respect to achieving the second insulator layer thickness of 8 to 10 angstroms. In the absence of unexpected results, it would appear that reducing the oxidation time would have allowed formation of a thinner oxide.

As to claim 30, Masuoka cites the oxide layers are used for gate oxide (abstract), which conventionally requires forming conductive gate structures to operate the associated devices.

Response to Amendments/Arguments

7. In response to applicant not conceding that Lim et al. is prior art to this application, the consideration of priority will be made after a declaration antedating the reference of Lim et al. is filed.

8. Applicant's arguments, see pages 7-9 of the response, filed on 12/21/2005, with respect to the rejection(s) of claim(s) 1-25 under U.S.C 102(e) and 103(a) have been fully considered and are persuasive with respect to the fact that "removing a second section of said first insulator layer exposing a bare first section of said semiconductor substrate" has not been explicitly addressed in the office action. As a result, a new ground(s) of rejection is made in view of Lim et al. (US 20050093063) considering the disclosed related art, in order to address applicants arguments or amendments.

9. As to the added claims 26-30, applicant arguments which state that the prior art of Lim does not teach "exposing a top surface of a substrate region at the removed portion of the insulator", as required in newly added claim 26, have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection based on Masuoka (US 6,551,884) in view of Wolf et al. (S. Wolf and R.N. Ttauber, Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era, Volume 1- Process Technology, Lattice Press, 1986) because Masuoka teaches "exposing a top surface of a substrate region at the removed portion of the insulator" and Wolf et al. teach oxidation of bare silicon.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Mahmoud Dahimene whose telephone number is (571) 272-2410. The examiner can normally be reached on week days from 8:00 AM. to 5:00 PM..

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Nadine Norton can be reached on (571) 272-1465. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Mahmoud Dahimene
MD

NADINE G. NORTON
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER

NL